# News Release
# Communiqué

Ontario

Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

Ministère de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée

For Immediate Release
June 22, 2007
2007/nr-148

## MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT ADVANCES NEW OPTIONS FOR HIV TESTING

*Free Point Of Care HIV Testing To Give Results In 60 Seconds. Also Nearly Doubling the Number of HIV Testing Sites*

TORONTO – The McGuinty government is launching a groundbreaking HIV testing program – the first of its-kind in Canada – that will offer free, on-site testing that determines whether or not an individual has developed HIV and adding 24 new anonymous testing sites with an emphasis on northern and rural communities, Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman announced today.

"By making HIV testing faster, we are making a stressful process easier," said Smitherman. "We are also helping to keep all Ontarians healthy by encouraging people to get tested and thereby reduce the number of HIV-infected people who remain undiagnosed. It also means if you are positive, the support and appropriate treatment can be available faster."

Today's announcement also includes the creation of 24 additional anonymous HIV testing sites with a focus on providing equitable access across the province. Testing at these sites is expected to begin this fall. Once they are open, there will be 50 anonymous HIV testing sites across Ontario.

The point of care HIV testing program will be available in designated anonymous HIV testing sites, sexually transmitted infections clinics and community health centres around the province.

The point of care test screens for the antibodies of HIV in blood. Within 60 seconds, a drop of blood can determine whether or not an individual has developed antibodies to HIV. The test is as accurate as current laboratory based testing in Ontario and the whole process takes 20 minutes, including pre-test counselling, test administration and post-test counselling. A test that shows the presence of antibodies will require additional blood analysis from a laboratory to confirm a positive HIV test result.

"The expansion of anonymous testing combined with point of care testing will provide greater access to HIV testing for Ontarians," Ron Rosenes, Member of the Board, Sherbourne Health Centre. "This is an important milestone in HIV testing."

"This is a huge step forward in our ongoing response to HIV/AIDS in Ontario," said Jane Greer, Coordinator/Counsellor, Hassle Free Clinic. "We would like to commend the Ontario government for being the first in Canada to make Point of Care HIV tests publicly available."

"About 30 per cent of people who are HIV positive in Ontario are unaware of their status," said Frank McGee, Coordinator, AIDS Bureau. "We understand people may fear knowing the results, but getting tested will help alleviate the anxiety and will make a difference in the effectiveness of treatment."

Today's initiative is part of the McGuinty government's plan for innovation in public health care, building a system that delivers on three priorities – keeping Ontarians healthy, reducing wait times and providing better access to doctors and nurses.

2008-00190/

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